

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES, SUSTAINING SOCIAL CHANGE

Community Mobilization in the West Bank and Gaza



Project Overview

Hanan's goal is to ensure that women of reproductive age (15-49) and children under 5, in the most vulnerable West Bank and Gaza (WB/G) communities, have access to an essential package of quality maternal and child health and nutrition services. The 3-year project is funded by USAID and builds capacity in health facilities and communities, initially working with 23 clinics in over 50 communities.

What is Community Mobilization (CM)?

CM is a capacity building process through which individuals, groups or organizations **plan, carry out, and evaluate activities** on a **participatory and sustained basis** to improve their health and other needs. These improvements may be undertaken on their own initiative or stimulated by others.

The end result of successful CM is not only a "problem solved" but the **increased capacity** to successfully address a community's needs and desires¹.

Why Mobilize?

WB/G enjoys assets such as a high literacy rate, networks of active community-based organizations (CBOs), and an established primary health care system that includes the public, private and non-governmental sectors. However, limited resources and geographically and politically fragmented service areas present ongoing challenges. It is essential therefore, that available assets are garnered and existing challenges are acknowledged in an effort to improve health services.

More importantly, sustaining such improvements require not only community input but rather, leadership, ownership and continuous action from the communities themselves. In the end, it is local action that will ensure long term and sustained improvements in the health of a community.

Demanding Quality Health Care: Hanan's Community Mobilization Strategy

CM is not a new concept in WB/G, in that several communities and health facilities in Hanan's initial cohort have utilized a variety of community-based mechanisms. However, the level of community involvement as well as the strategies used for improving accessibility and quality of maternal, child health and nutrition services have varied widely.

Approaches have ranged from limited participation of communities to true, active partnership. In addition, while many programs have used elements of CM to create links with local communities, these activities have not been well-linked with clinical interventions and have often struggled to remain active and sustainable².

In Hanan's integrated approach to improving the quality of health services, CM serves as the essential link between the capacity building efforts at the health facility level (the "supply-side") and marketing efforts at the community level (the "demand-side"). **CM, as envisioned by Hanan, aims to transform communities from their classic role as "recipients" of health care into active, informed users. Ultimately, Hanan with its partners hopes that these users will become "consumers" of services who demand sustained, high quality care from their local health facilities.**

Communities in Action: The Hanan Model

The Hanan CM model is based on the Community Mobilization Action Cycle (see diagram), a series of steps dependent on an equal and essential partnership between the community, Hanan, and its non-governmental organization (NGO) partners responsible for implementation in WB/G.

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Organizing for Action: A structure for collective action is created through the formation of a Community Coalition (CC). This CC is comprised of recognizable individuals (with a focus on gender balance) such as local leaders, representatives of CBOs, the Hanan-designated health facility serving the community, and the local private sector. The CC works closely with the partner NGO's staff of health workers and designates a "contact person" within each community, who is responsible for maintaining program documentation and acting as the liaison between the three partners.

Tapping Into What Exists: Communities are assisted in researching and organizing their health resources through a Community Capacity Assessment (CCA). The CCA maps health needs as well as assets, to build upon existing resources such as trained community health workers, strong CBOs, and neighborhood committees.

Planning & Acting

Together: Action plans based on the CCA findings are analyzed and endorsed by the CC, participants in the CCA, Hanan's NGO partners and other interested stakeholders.

Promoting Health: Healthy practices and health-seeking behaviors promoted by the health facilities are reinforced at the community-level through messages from health workers at local events and festivals, within homes, and through media and a variety of other non-traditional communication channels.

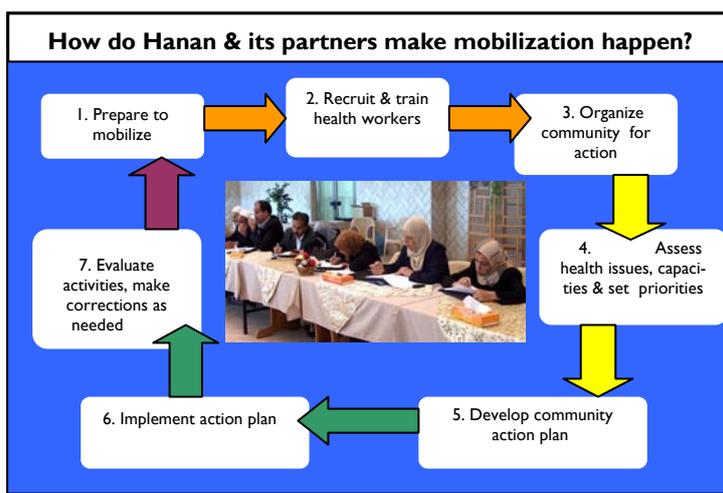
Demanding Quality: Clients become empowered consumers in their own health care through close communication with providers. Opportunities for clients to voice their needs and improve the quality of care they receive include: suggestion boxes at each facility, regular client satisfaction surveys, and joint reviews between the facility management and the CC.

Tracking & Sustaining Impact: Data collection and evaluation activities are implemented by and for the community. These include maintenance of local registries to track ante-and post-natal care as well as ongoing monitoring of client satisfaction within the facility. Data is used to improve the quality of services at health facilities as well as hold providers accountable to their clients.

What Hanan's CM Wants to Leave Behind

For Hanan, a "mobilized" community means:

- * Empowered women who take control of their health, the health of their families and practice improved health behaviors.
- * Informed clients who demand high quality care from their health facilities.
- * Organized communities that can successfully meet their future health needs, build partnerships, and tackle other priorities to improve their quality of life.



Community leaders discuss local health issues at the launch of the Gaza preparation meeting for community mobilization. October '05

It has been stated that "there isn't a day when community work ends. In a healthy community, working together for the good of the community is a constant part of everyone's lives³." This suggests that rather than being an activity that is promoted by a project, CM must become a part of the community through which positive social change is not only achieved, but is also sustained.

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References

1. Howard-Grabman, L., & Snetro, G. *How to Mobilize Communities for Health and Social Change: Field Guide*. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Center for Communication Programs. Baltimore, MD. 2003.
2. Shaheen M. *Review of Community Mobilization Experiences in Palestine*. Hanan Project. West Bank/Gaza. March 2005.
3. The Community Tool Box, University of Kansas. <http://ctb.ku.edu>

The Hanan Project is made possible by support provided by the US Agency for International Development, West Bank/Gaza, under the terms of Cooperative Agreement Number 294-A-00-05-00201-00. The opinions expressed herein are those of the Hanan Project and do not necessarily reflect the views of the US Agency for International Development.